



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Walter H. Crowley School

Q005

**50-40 Jacobus Street
Elmhurst
NY 11373**

Principal: Kelly Nepogoda

Dates of review: March 10-12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

IS 5 is an intermediate school with 1620 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 53% Hispanic, 3% White, and 42% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.10%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is dedicated to aligning the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to curricula and the instructional shifts, so that units of study provide rigorous tasks that are rich and motivating for all learners. (1.1)
 - Throughout the school year teachers have been working collaboratively on curricula units in English language arts (ELA) with an integrated writing piece aligned to science and social studies. In math, the school has incorporated focus, coherence and conceptual questions to the curriculum. School leaders and staff chose to continue to use teacher designed ELA curricula which they had aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and have the support of a consultant for ongoing English language learner instructional shifts. As a result, the writing proficiency levels of English language learners, in a newcomer category, have increased by more than 50% since September of this school year. Additionally, purposeful decisions to emphasize key standards like citing claims from text based sources during writing and using academic vocabulary in all content areas is in evidence across the curriculum. Student work has shown gains in increased reading levels based on this process.
 - The school focuses on collaborative learning and incorporating higher order skills into performance tasks like adding complexity of texts, providing evidence and knowledge within discussions and creating student based questions that are sequenced to help propel deeper engagement with texts, as well as analyzing student work during teacher team meetings. The math department has shifted its instruction to add student autonomy within the *Explore* portion of a lesson. The social studies and ELA departments have researched ways to integrate content areas across the curriculum and within writing tasks and now share a rubric for argumentative writing. Teams create higher order tasks aligned to the Common Core learning Standards to push students' thinking with real world application and a focus on the inquiry process. For example, students in an eighth grade class were asked to answer text dependent questions by finding relevant evidence in the text to support their claims. As a result of these practices and coherent units across grades, all students have an opportunity to be challenged and meet the expectations of the CCLS.
- The leadership team's allocation of resources and targeted teacher assignments maximizes opportunities for professional learning, resulting in increased student support and performance. (1.3)
 - The administration supports the school's instructional goals with resources in order to increase student progress, teacher effectiveness and coherence of instruction across the school. The development and implementation of an instructional cabinet, which consists of teachers from the ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science and Special Education departments has helped to build teacher capacity and have teachers own the inquiry process to support and increase students' academic

learning. The instructional cabinet ensures that all voices are heard in curriculum and instructional reform. A result of this team's efforts has supported the increase of students' reading levels and offered access to informational text in all content areas. *Books on Broadway* is a program encouraging students to read and then have an opportunity to view a Broadway show. Targeted students meet weekly to read, question and discuss characterization and the major themes in selected novels. Students posit that this experience makes the books "come alive" and they are thrilled to see a play in such an exciting forum.

- Administration conscientiously planned the school schedule to provide teachers with a minimum of two common periods per week to meet with their grade. Teachers state that the common meeting time has led to strong and purposeful collaboration around curriculum planning and the development of tasks that are designed to challenge students to meet their goals. Teachers of expert status are looped to the next grade with their students of previous years to carefully track their progress and maintain successful teaching and learning practices for students. In addition, close attention is paid to hiring new teachers and targeted teacher assignments where teachers are given roles based on their strengths and the learning needs of the students. For example, an integrated co-teaching partnership was created where both teachers would benefit from the other's best practices in order to increase student learning. As a result of these initiatives the school is meeting its school wide instructional goals. Furthermore, teachers agree that collaboration leads to deeper understanding of students' individualized needs and students who are matched with the same teachers over time have an increase in reading levels, strong engagement strategies and a wide variety of learning choices as evidenced in increased student data and work products .
- The school's culture and partnerships embrace students in a respectful learning environment where the "whole child" is valued and social emotional development is a high priority. (1.4)
 - School leaders and teachers, in collaboration with the community, are proud of the fact that the school's learning environment focuses on all aspects of development; social-emotional needs for students' academic growth and emotional strength to celebrate individuality. Students posit that their teachers are always available to help them with their work and that teachers are "kind, respectful and very dedicated to their profession". One student stated that if it was not for this school he would not know how to tackle some challenges in his life. He credited the school for helping him through personal issues and feels he is "protected by the walls of the building". The student council is an interactive group of leaders who reach out to peers who need assistance or who have advice to better the school. The Student Council is responsible for messaging to peers, behavior protocols, attendance improvements and motivating activities which have decreased incidents from last year to this year. Students' good deeds and appropriate behaviors are acknowledged throughout the school sending a cohesive message of teamwork and community pride. Parents also voice their appreciation towards the caring staff and assurance that their children are receiving strong supports. As a result, according to the Department of Education's latest Learning Environment Survey (LES) 95% of the parents polled believe that this

school is on the right track and they would recommend this school to other parents as a solid establishment for teaching and learning.

- The school, with over 1,600 students, is divided into three academies and each is supported by a triad of an assistant principal, dean and guidance counselor. These formidable teams are aware of each student's goals and needs. There is out reach to families where academic results and social-emotional developments are consistently communicated. Furthermore, the guidance counselors independently track students' progress and keep parents informed of pertinent changes. Successful guidance practices have resulted in students with disabilities being reassigned to least restrictive environments with in the past year. These practices have effectively addressed students' needs, as evidenced by a significant reduction in behavior occurrences and an increase in student work from the number of students who have grown to achieve academic proficiency levels over time.
- School leaders prioritize the observation of classroom instruction and provide teachers with constructive feedback and supports that consistently communicate clear expectations for improving instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The school supports teacher growth with alignment between planning conferences, school-wide goals and instructional expectations. This year's focus is on incorporating writing from historical and informative sources, creating argumentative claims in science and social studies, increasing students' math proficiency through real-life application and infusing academic vocabulary into all content area work. School leaders are committed to observing instruction on a daily basis and providing teachers, including novice staff, with verbal feedback soon after the classroom visit. Follow up visits are conducted to view the implementation of recommendations. The school is focused on Domains 3B (Questioning and Discussion Techniques), 1E (Planning for Instruction), 3C (Student Engagement) and 3D (Assessment in Instruction) of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as leverage points that the school believes will create increased levels of student progress. Feedback is based on observations of teaching practices, student data and planning strategies in order to provide supports that lead to teachers reflecting on their own practice. Results of this process has demonstrated effective feedback to teachers including next steps leading to professional development and improvement in instructional practices, as measured by subsequent observations.
 - School leaders have created an environment where teachers are able to actively participate in their professional growth. Teachers receive on-going formal and informal feedback, in alignment with the Danielson rubric, which includes clear next steps regarding their practices. For example, the school is focusing on questioning strategies and this competency is regularly discussed during staff and individual teacher meetings. It is also evident in written observations. Teachers share that conversations about student data and work samples provides them with clear guidance and support to improve their instructional development. As a result, teachers are showing growth on the research-based continuum for pedagogical improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Research and strengthen instructional practices across classrooms to ensure that diverse students are consistently provided with multiple entry points and challenging tasks enabling them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Teachers agree that students learn best when work is differentiated according to data over time and students' self-reflections of their progress. Although there is a strong awareness of students' needs, at this time teaching practices have not yet fully aligned with the work done to strengthen curriculum supporting the Danielson Framework and instructional shifts. While there is lesson alignment of the learning objective, classroom practices range from interactive, student centered and collaborative, to solely teacher directed with few opportunities for deeper understanding of content or enthusiastic student participation. As observed in classrooms visited, questions are designed to engage students in thinking, but only a few students are consistently involved. Furthermore, although teams design unit questions aligned to the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix, in order to push students' thinking, most questions asked by classroom teachers follow a single path of inquiry rather than challenging students to justify their thinking. As a result, pedagogical strategies and student work products do not consistently produce high levels of student thinking demonstrating uneven practice, predictable learning experiences and lack of student autonomy through facilitation of instruction.
 - School leaders have an expectation that, across grade levels, teachers use scaffolding strategies and group students flexibly to meet their individual learning needs. Scaffolding is evident in teacher designed curricula, but not consistently embedded in lessons to ensure that students with disabilities, English language learners and higher achieving students have an opportunity to access and advance their learning. For example, a school wide goal is to incorporate academic vocabulary in math work so that all students can explain how and why they are solving a problem, but when asked why a particular topic was being taught students believed it was because the topic needed to be learned for an upcoming Regents exam. Furthermore, there were limited opportunities for higher achieving students to expand their knowledge as they were grouped to assist classmates in need of reaching proficiency. Consequently, uneven teaching practices to support consistent rigor in tasks, limits achievement across content areas, as evidenced in some student work products.
- Revisit the use of formative data and assessment results to evaluate student progress and better inform daily plans and instructional adjustments to track and meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - There is a wealth of assessments available to determine progress towards students' content based goals. For example, there are pre and post assessments for each unit of study in English language arts, math, social studies and science in addition to student reflection and goal

sheets by unit of study. These assessments are closely aligned to the school's curricula and offer next learning steps for students. At this time, however, although teachers conscientiously provide comments about students' work and indicate feedback that students can use to move forward on improving skills, not all students can translate the message of what they need to do to accomplish mastery of the task at hand. For example, one student stated that he needed to use better transitions between paragraphs, but when asked what strategies he would use to accomplish this, the task was unclear. As a result, students are moving from skill to skill with an inconsistent framework of what work they need to show improvement and what time span is deemed appropriate for this to happen. Thus, not all students are moving toward meeting their goals for mastery in a timely manner.

- Teachers have been working in inquiry teams to evaluate different assessments in order to gauge students' strengths and weaknesses. This is taking place across grades and content areas. Curricula adjustments and instruction is transparent work that teams of teachers have been involved in. The Math department has worked to implement an inquiry based model for instruction. Teachers have revised assessments and performance tasks and are strategically utilizing CMP3's *Explore* stage to fill the gap surfaced through teacher observations regarding student engagement in complex problems that require deep thinking and meaningful mathematical discussions with peers. Although curricula adjustments are available, there is no evidence of the consistent use of common assessments to monitor skills development. Specifically, teachers are tracking students in different ways making it difficult to determine how the data that is being collected is driving instruction. As a result, students are being grouped for instruction but the lack of common data lessens opportunities to inform instructional and curricular adjustments to increase student mastery toward goals to close the achievement gap.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Walter H. Crowley School I.S. 5	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed